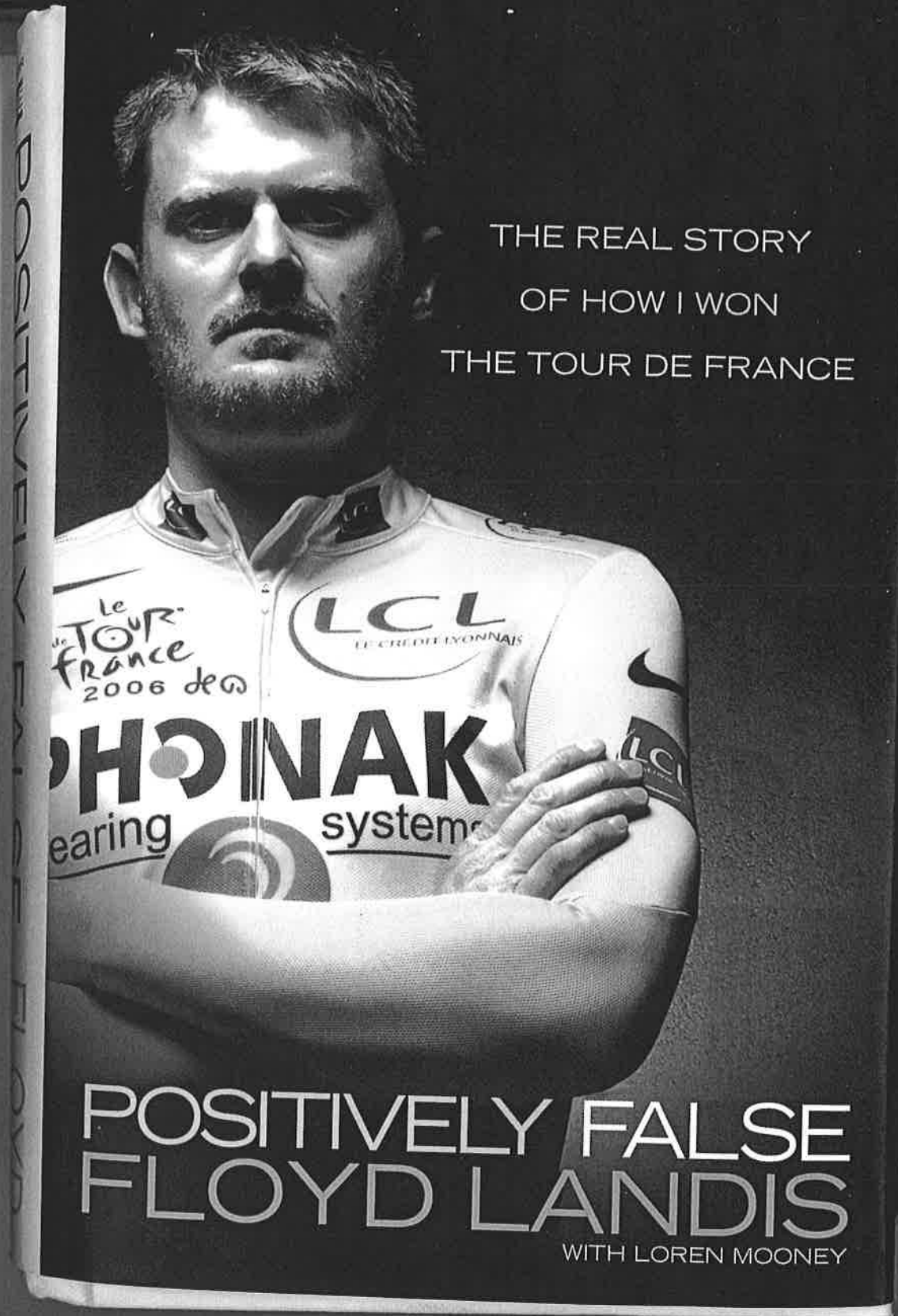


EXHIBIT 20



POSITIVELY FALSE

quickly and get my life back were to give them information on "bigger names" and to accept the suspension.

"That's completely out of the question," I told Howard when he presented the deal to me. "In fact, I find everything about it offensive." First of all, they were assuming that I was guilty even before we received the full test results. Why would I negotiate for a suspension when I'm innocent? They were trying to use me as a pawn to get to Lance. They didn't really care whether I was a cheater. If they could find an even bigger case than mine, they'd practically let me go, without regard to whether or not I had done what they were alleging.

What didn't make sense to me was why they were going after Lance in the first place. By then, Lance had been retired for more than a year. USADA is supposed to protect the integrity of athletic competition by fighting against doping. It gets about 60 percent of its funding from your tax dollars, and the U.S. Olympic Committee funds the rest. Why would they actively pursue someone who didn't even compete anymore?

"It's how they operate," Howard said. "They're after high-profile cases, because those are like ammunition for them to go beg for more money." Howard explained that USADA is a young organization, founded in 2000, that is trying to prove itself. After BALCO, the 2003 Bay Area doping scandal, USADA made an appeal to Congress that doping permeated all levels of big-time sports, and that more money was needed to combat dopers. Its federal funding had been doubled, and now they needed to show results.

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But I didn't have any evidence to give them about Lance, anyway. If Lance had been doping, he sure didn't tell me about it. He would have been a fool to do so. Ever since his first Tour win in 1999, the press and all sorts of different authorities had suspected Lance of doping. The year I joined Postal, in 2002, the team was under doping investigation by French officials, though the case was dropped for lack of evidence. Books have been written with allegations, and people who once worked for him have made claims—but nothing has ever held up in court. All I know is that I never saw anything to indicate that Lance used performance-enhancing drugs, that his blood and urine were tested more than anyone else's, and that he never returned a positive test.

Later, with Will, I couldn't shake my anger about the offer. "If USADA is so sure Lance was a doper, then why didn't their supposedly bulletproof scientific drug tests catch him?" I said. "At this point, whether or not he was doping isn't really even the point." To me the point was: They didn't catch him. They had all those years, and they didn't catch him. They needed to *let it go*. It was over. To focus on Lance was a complete waste of time, and even downright negligent, considering USADA's mission. No possible good could come from rooting up the past. Instead, they should be using all their resources on the problems of the present—like how their tests had snagged someone who didn't use testosterone.

"What a bunch of backward-looking idiots," Will said. "They have no regard for the truth."

and smiled. For a moment, everything was as it should have been. I was back in Farmersville with my buddy Eric, both of us proud that I fulfilled what had been my dream for more than a decade.

The sport of cycling is sick and in need of major reform. The UCI has way too much control over athletes' lives. We riders need to form a true union to protect ourselves. Without us, there is no race. But as it is, the UCI profits from our efforts, and then fails miserably to protect us from injustice.

By organizing, riders could have more power in salary negotiations with teams and more collective force in fighting unjust anti-doping policies that lead to terrible consequences and do nothing but kill fans' enthusiasm for cycling.

My case should never have happened.

The Operación Puerto scandal should not have impacted the sport the way it did. Officials should have had enough proof to convict before they forced teams to kick riders out of the 2006 Tour.

The problem is that the way the UCI rules are set up, all it takes is a suspicion to halt a rider's career and put his reputation in doubt. What's to stop me from starting a rumor right now and wrecking someone's life? It's way too easy to presume guilt. There needs to be accountability for cases where there is harmful presumption without solid proof.

Some of the riders allegedly linked to Operación Puerto chose to retire from cycling rather than deal with the hassle, while others were cleared by their national federations to race